

Interview With Foreign Print Journalists

May 31, 2007

The President. First, I'm really looking forward to the trip. It's a chance for me to see old friends, make new friends, and talk about an agenda that is based upon freedom and the obligation, for those of us who benefit from our free societies, to help less fortunate people.

Obviously, the G-8 is going to be the center point of the visit; it will be where the most focus is. But I take my bilateral visits very seriously. We're starting in the Czech Republic; I'm looking forward to seeing the President and the Prime Minister. That's my third trip? Second trip? Second trip. It's a beautiful city.

Besides my bilateral meetings with the leadership, I am looking forward to my democracy speech. Vaclav Havel has asked me to come and speak to a democracy forum. I feel very strongly that the United States must take the lead in promoting democracy around the world—even in places where it may not look like it could—that it's very hospitable because I believe, ultimately, it is hospitable. And so it's going to be an important speech, and I'm working on it.

And then, of course, I go to Germany for the G-8. I've been in that beautiful part of your country before. I'm looking forward to the seaside resort. Of course, I'm anxious to see the Chancellor. She and I have got a very strong relationship. I don't know if you know this or not, but we do visit via secure video on a fairly regular basis. I've had some—you know, a lot of meaningful conversations with her, other than by phone.

And then the G-8, it's going to be an important meeting, just like all G-8s are. And this year I'll be talking about the need for all of us to work together to deal with HIV/AIDS and malaria and education. And, of course, global climate change will be an issue as well.

And then we'll go on to Poland. I'm looking forward to going back—for my third time; twice in Czech Republic, third time in Poland. Of course, part of the discussions with both countries will be on missile defense. I'll be glad to answer any questions you have

on that. It's just an important issue for us to discuss, and it's an important for me to allay people's fears.

My friend Vladimir Putin is making this to be a case where somehow this is going to jeopardize relations in Europe and it's going to make the world a more dangerous place—quite the opposite. The reason one advocates and works for a missile defense system is to protect free peoples from the launch of a missile from a hostile regime. Russia is not hostile. Russia is a friend. We don't agree with Russia all the time, but nevertheless, I view them as a friendly nation, not a hostile nation. And I will work with Vladimir Putin not only at the G-8 but when he comes to visit up east here. But I know that's going to be part of our conversation.

By the way, in the case of the Czech Republic, Poland, Italy, and, to a certain extent, Bulgaria, and definitely Germany, there's a lot of, obviously, you know, Americans who are very interested in this trip. Polish Americans are—there's a lot of them, and they really love their country of origin, their grandfathers' country of origin. And this is an important trip symbolically, as well, to see their American President in Poland—or in Italy, a lot of Italian Americans are very proud of their heritage as well.

So the trip, obviously, is the chance to visit on important issues, whether it be Afghanistan or Iraq, where these countries are supportive, as well as their common interests in bilateral issues.

I'm looking forward to two things in Italy—obviously seeing His Holy Father. Sometimes I'm not poetic enough to describe what it's like to be in the presence of the Holy Father. It is a moving experience. And I have not been in the presence of this particular Holy Father. Obviously, three visits with the last great man, and I'm looking forward to this. I'm looking forward to hearing him. He's a good thinker and a smart man. I'll be in a listening mode.

And then Prime Minister Prodi, with whom I've had a long relationship. I knew him when he was the head of the EU. I can remember, fondly remember riding my mountain bike as hard as I could as he was jogging along the beaches in Georgia, needing him on the way by—a sign of close

friendship. We've got a good relationship. He's having to make difficult decisions in Afghanistan, and I hope my visit will help boost his courage in doing the right thing in Afghanistan.

And then, of course, Bulgaria; I'm looking forward to that as well. I've never been; it's the first time. I'm looking forward to seeing the leadership there. Bulgaria has made some very difficult decisions, but necessary decisions. We're proud to be allies. It's going to be—I love going to countries that may not expect to see the U.S. President. It's pretty predictable that the President would go to Germany or Italy, probably Poland and the Czech Republic, but not necessarily Bulgaria and Albania. And it's going to be a great honor for me to be in your country. I'm looking forward to it.

I'm excited about the trip. I gave a speech today—I don't know if you suffered through it or not, but it's—anyway, I was proud to give it, and I meant what I said. And we've got a darn good record, and I'm going to be taking that record, on behalf of the American people, to the G-8 and hoping to encourage others to match it.

Teodor. Ted.

Missile Defense System

Q. Teodor. You can call me Ted.

The President. Call me W. [Laughter]

Q. You just said that Vladimir Putin is your friend.

The President. Yes, he is.

Q. Now, given his angry response to missile defense, do you regret choosing Czech Republic and Poland as possible sites for the missile defense?

The President. No. The reason this country has been chosen is because it will make the missile defense system more effective as we provide defenses for most of our NATO allies.

Secondly, friends can disagree.

Q. Did he disappoint you?

The President. He is a—he is concerned about the missile defense system. He thinks it's aimed at him. It's not. It's aimed at rogue regimes that would use a missile to achieve political objective or to create unrest. And therefore, I sent Secretary Gates to see the leadership, the Russian leadership, to explain

our intentions. We've invited the Russians to participate, totally transparent——

Q. They are not happy——

The President. Let me finish, Ted. We're totally transparent in our designs. We want them to see our technologies. They're welcome to come. Angela Merkel was very instrumental in us reaching out to the Russians; she was deeply concerned about the ramifications of this decision. And so we're working very carefully, but we think it's the right thing to do.

Secondly, it is—I repeat, we have nothing to hide. Bob Gates said, you know, this kind of rhetoric is the kind of rhetoric that relieves the cold war. But the cold war is over. We're now into the 21st century, where we need to deal with the true threats, which are threats of radical extremists who will kill to advance an ideology and the threats of proliferation. And there's a lot of work we can do together to deal with these threats. And that's what I'll continue talking to President Putin about.

Klaus.

Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. But certainly it's fair to say the relationship between the West and Russia has become more complicated——

The President. Yes, it has.

Q. —in recent months. What needs to be done to avoid this relationship to degenerate further into a deep and lasting crisis? And in general, on that note, you set up the conversation. Is Russia—a reassertive Russia, a friend, an ally, or a challenge?

The President. For the U.S.—I can't speak for the EU-Russian relationship; that's recently where there's been some tension, as you noted—for the U.S.-Russian relationship, it's a complex relationship where we've got some areas of agreement and some areas of disagreement. We believe strongly in democracy. Vladimir Putin will tell me that Russia is a democracy and that he's advancing democracy. We have got some questions about that, of course. We believe that actions taken in Estonia, for example—in relation to the actions taken in Estonia were—it sent a confusing signal to us. We obviously have got a difficult issue with Kosovo. We believe

we ought to advance the Ahtisaari agreement through the United Nations Security Council.

But disagreement on issues doesn't mean that the relations aren't cordial. As a matter of fact, I have found that it's easier to disagree on issues when you have a cordial relationship. It means you can discuss your differences without hostility, which makes it easier that you can find common ground. And we have common ground with Russia on matters like Iran. We've worked closely with Russia in the U.N. Security Council to send a clear signal to the Iranians that their attempts at a nuclear weapon will be met with resistance, unified resistance.

The issue of proliferation is one where there's good cooperation between the United States and Russia. It's in the world's interest that the United States and Russia and other nations work together to stop proliferators from being able to get a hold of materials that could end up harming innocent people.

We've worked with Russia on North Korea. As you know, we spoke with one voice to the leadership in North Korea, that Russia and China and the United States and South Korea and Japan strongly oppose their desire to have a weapons program. And hopefully we can make progress.

In other words, one shouldn't be surprised that there are differences. And the fundamental question in world diplomacy is, how do you deal with the differences? Do you deal with them that ends up, hopefully, creating more opportunities for cooperation, or do you deal with them in such a way as it creates—it widens gulfs and creates more antagonisms?

And my relationship with Russia is firm. I tell people what I believe based upon certain principles. But it's going to be in such a way that treats people with respect. I've noticed that Angela Merkel has also had to deal with Vladimir Putin and has done so in a very respectful but firm way. And I admire the way she's handled her diplomacy. She has proven herself to be a very strong leader. And for that, I'm grateful, and I hope the German people are as well.

Marcin.

Poland-U.S. Relations/North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Q. Mr. President, your administration, you just said, offers a lot to Russia to gain acceptance, Russia's acceptance to idea building—[inaudible]—missile shield. And at the same time, so far, it doesn't seem that you offer much to Poland, which is supposed to host the interceptor site. How would you convince people in Poland, who are, frankly, not that much afraid of uranium threat, but they're listening to the threats from Russia very carefully?

The President. First of all, Poland and the U.S. are in NATO, and an attack on one is an attack on all. We can't offer any better security agreement than that, and we mean it. If you're an ally of the United States and NATO and you feel threatened by an outside force, we'll help you. I don't believe that there would be—I would certainly hope that Poland won't be threatened again by an outside force. I can understand why people in Poland could be nervous about that. After all, it's been a terrible part of your history.

But as an ally in NATO, I can't make a stronger statement than to say we stand with you, and in this case, this ally actually means it, and so do NATO allies. You know, I'm sure there's probably some skepticism from some older folks or those who study history, where Poland had been given assurances and those assurances didn't come through. Well, in this case, they will.

I don't view Poland as being under any military threat. I would hope the Polish people don't, either. Obviously, there are differences you have with Russia over meat, and I'm very aware of that. It's an EU matter; it's a matter that Angela Merkel is working hard, as the head of the EU at this point in time, to address that problem.

The best way to compensate Poland for our friendship is to have good, strong bilateral relations. As you know, we've worked hard on different agreements that would help create jobs. It's really the best thing that a relationship can do is yield tangible benefits for people, besides peace and security. And job creation and decent-paying jobs benefit society as a whole. And there's jobs as a result

of our airplane deal; there's capital investment; there is more transparency in our relationship. And we'll keep it that way. I'm sure I'll be discussing that with the President.

Yes, Maurizio.

Pope Benedict XVI/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. Mr. President.

The President. How are you?

Q. Very good. Thank you for having us back here.

The President. Yes.

Q. Your first meeting with Benedict XVI, what are the values that you believe you share with this Pope? And besides this, on foreign policy, what common ground you may have with the Catholic Church on issues like Cuba or China or Lebanon?

The President. Yes. Thank you. The common values are respect for human life, human—and dignity. I think His Holy Father will be pleased to know that much of our foreign policy is based on the admonition, to whom much is given, much is required. I look forward to sharing with him our sincere desire to help alleviate poverty and hunger and disease.

I will remind him—in the Rose Garden yesterday, I talked about spending \$30 billion on our battle against HIV/AIDS, particularly on the continent of Africa. Our initiative is, thus far, a \$15 billion initiative over 5 years, that's helped provide antiretroviral drugs for about 1,100,000 people in a 3-year period, up from 50,000. Many of those folks who are helping to carry out that initiative are people from Catholic charities or Catholic congregations here in the United States, and I will tell him how proud I am of our Catholic citizens who have volunteered, in many cases, to help relieve suffering around the world.

I will also talk to him about our malaria initiative where we believe we will have gotten help to folks, particularly on the continent of Africa, in the form of nets and insecticides and medicines, to about 30 million people. I will remind him that this commitment is real and sincere.

I believe he believes—look, I don't want to put words in his mouth—I hope he believes in the universality of freedom because I certainly do. In other words, freedom is not just a Western ideal. It's just not the ideal

that some people—it's universal in application. I will remind him of my firm belief that freedom is not only universal, but history has proven democracies tend not to war with each other and that the best way to yield the peace, something I long for, is to help people become free.

I hope to get him talking. He's a sound thinker. I've read one of his works, and I'm looking forward to hearing this good, decent, honorable man share some thoughts with me. And I go in open-minded, and I'm willing to listen.

Just in terms of other issues, I will—if he cares to talk about Cuba, I'd love to talk about Cuba. I believe Cuba ought to be free. And I believe that when there is a transition to new leadership, the world ought to work for freedom, not stability, that the leading edge of our agenda ought to be to say to whomever takes over that government, we expect there to be elections and free press, free prisoners.

You mentioned Lebanon, I will confirm our strong support for the Siniora Government. I'm impressed by his courage. And I will explain to him that one of the reasons why we felt like it was important to go through with the Hariri trial for the U.N. was to enhance the Siniora Government, and it's to make it clear that there's been foreign interference in that country, and we expect that foreign interference to stop.

The other issue is China. I will tell him that there, too, we've got good relations, and I intend to keep them that way. Part of having good relations with a country is being in a position to talk about religious freedoms. I would remind him that I have been to church in China and actually found it to be a spiritual experience. It wasn't, like, fake; it was real. But I will assure him that I will continue to make the case for the Catholic Church inside of China.

One of the things I don't know if he knows I know, but there has been an attempt to get a good interface between the Chinese Government and the Catholic Church so that eventually the prescribed leadership, Catholic leadership would be able to have an active role in China. So far, the Chinese Government has resisted this, but I have been in—received several entreaties from our Catholic

cardinals here on behalf of His Holy Father to reach out to the Chinese, and I have. And if he cares, I will be glad to summarize those contacts with him.

Petar.

Missile Defense System/North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Q. Mr. President, concerning the shield, the anti-missile shield, I know Bulgaria is one of the newest members of NATO. But as I know, the shield will not cover the southeastern part of NATO, including Bulgaria. And there are American military facilities in this country, which makes some people nervous there. Are you planning to change the situation?

The President. The missile defense that we're talking about is primarily for the longer term missile. That's where the debate is. And you're right, that won't cover all of NATO. As I said in my opening comments, it will cover most of NATO.

Bulgaria will be covered by NATO missile defenses for intermediate-range missiles, and I will be glad to make that case. It's important for our NATO—when I'm in Bulgaria, it's important for our NATO allies not to feel like defenses apply to some but not everybody. And as you know, we're in discussions about access bases, which also, I would hope, would provide a sense of security.

The first goal, of course, is to work with everybody in your neighborhood to try to convince them to be peaceful in the first place so that the defenses aren't needed. But we've got to make sure if they ever are needed, that they're effective. And as you know, I'm deeply concerned about Iran having a nuclear weapon that could fly toward Europe or, for that matter, toward any other allies. And we don't want to ever have ourselves in a position where the world could become blackmailed.

And therefore, one way to deal with this issue is through a missile defense system. However, such a weapon, in this particular scenario, would not affect Bulgaria. It would be a much smaller one, for which we have different technologies, NATO technologies available.

One more round? All right, Ted. Is it, Ted?

War on Terror

Q. Yes, you can call me Ted. [Laughter]

The President. You already told me that once. I forgot.

Q. Mr. President, for better or worse, you undoubtedly changed modern history of this vote. I mean, are you happy with your decisions? Are you comfortable with your decisions? Are you listening to criticism around the world?

The President. Yes, there's a little bit of criticism out there, evidently. Yes, Ted, I hear what people say, and I'm very comfortable with my decisions, absolutely. Our country came under attack, and I vowed to the American people I would do all in my power to protect it, and it's still under threat. And the best way to protect America is to stay on the offense and bring people to justice before they hurt us. And we don't do that alone—we work with allies and friends, and we share intelligence; we help cut off money; we disrupt, jointly—

Q. Don't you—

The President. Let me finish, Ted. I also knew that we had to deal with threats before they came to hurt us, whether it be in Afghanistan and Iraq. I made the right decisions. And now the fundamental question is, will the world help these young democracies develop? And I believe it's in all our interests that these democracies survive. And I'm looking forward to thanking our host countries when I travel for their commitments—in some cases, Iraq and Afghanistan; in some cases only Afghanistan. Either case, they're very important.

If democracies can't help other democracies, then I worry about stability and peace in the long run. And so, no, I believe the decisions I made were the right decisions.

Q. You don't feel abandoned?

The President. What?

Q. Abandoned. You don't feel abandoned?

The President. No, no, not at all. Matter of fact, I was amazed by—he asked, do I feel abandoned. Quite the contrary. I feel that we're in this long-term struggle with a lot of strong allies—a lot. There's a lot of people in Iraq that committed resources and manpower and effort. A lot of people in Afghanistan—all the NATO countries have got manpower there, plus a lot of other countries.

No, quite the contrary. I feel these alliances are significant. And, you know, you've got to work at them. I constantly remind people there's a threat. And the stakes in the world—but, no. Thank you for asking.

Klaus-Dieter. My roommate in college was Rob Dieter. He was from Florida, though. [Laughter] You're Klaus-Dieter. Okay.

U.S.-EU Cooperation on the Environment/Alternative Fuel Sources

Q. Mr. President, in the run-up to the G-8 meeting, our energy—our climate change turnout will be a divisive issue, at least to the German press.

The President. Really? You mean you want it to be divisive.

Q. No, not at all.

The President. Are you going to go in open-minded?

Q. Yes, I'm always open-minded.

The President. That's good. Is that the case—

Q. Always. [Laughter]

Q. Let's say assuming it was true—you were—[inaudible]—this morning. Does it help to bridge the gap between the U.S. position and the European position, which includes firm mandatory caps on greenhouse gases? And is there any prospect for a firm consensus at Heiligendamm? Or have you basically preempted Heiligendamm?

The President. No, look, first of all, your opening question was, the German press is looking for conflict, is that what you said? I don't want to misquote you. [Laughter] I think, look, if people want to try to figure out a way to be divisive, they will try to create divisions. I don't view it that way. I view this as an effort by concerned nations to reach common accord to actually solve the problem.

And the initiative I laid out today said, we'll take the world's largest emitters of greenhouse gases and come up with an international goal. In other words, there needs to be a post-Kyoto framework. And I suggested, here's one way to deal with the post-Kyoto world. First thing that the Chancellor wanted to know is, did I agree there ought to be a post-Kyoto framework? That's the threshold question, because if it's no, then we can end the conversation. If it's yes, then

what are your suggestions? And so today I said I believe there ought to be a post-Kyoto framework. And I believe Angela will be pleased with that because she is—this was something she was working toward.

Secondly, I believe there ought to be an international goal. How we arrive at that goal is—I set out a process where greenhouse gas emitters, including developing nations, ought to be at the table. As you know full well, that one could have a very strict regime on greenhouse gases, but if nothing were done with countries like India or China, all would be for naught. So I thought it made sense to include a variety of nations that are actually producing greenhouse gases, including Russia and China and India and the United States and the EU and others.

Thirdly, I said that each nation needs to come up with an interim goal and develop the methodology to achieve that goal. In other words, there's a commitment in our country—now, I said this in the Rose Garden, next to the Chancellor and Jose Barroso, that each country has got to develop a plan that suits its own economy and suits its own political environment. If you want the U.S. to be an active participant, that's the best way to do it as well. A lot of people don't particularly want our environmental policy written by somebody else. They think we ought to be writing our own environmental policy, in this case, to achieve international goals. And that's my pledge. I'm looking forward to it.

And I also bring a very good record, because the truth of the matter is, technology is going to enable us to meet two objectives—or three objectives, in the U.S. case: one, energy independent; two, economic vitality and growth. And as an active trading partner with the United States, you would want us to be economically strong. You don't want your trading partner to be weak; there would be nothing to trade with. And, finally, a strong steward of the environment, and technology is going to lead us there. And I look forward to explaining some of the technological breakthroughs that we have achieved and will achieve.

You probably don't know this but we're up to about, I think, 6 billion gallons of corn ethanol now being used in our cars. Over

the next years, 50 percent of every automobile in the United States will be flex-fuel. In other words, you can either use ethanol or gasoline, your choice. There's significant market penetration for ethanol in the Midwest. But we're spending billions of dollars—or millions of dollars, hundreds of millions of dollars, on coming up with the ability to break down different forms of feedstocks to produce ethanol. That's called cellulosic ethanol, like switch grasses or wood chips. Wouldn't it be remarkable when we have a breakthrough to develop fuel to run our automobiles from wood chips? You got a lot of wood in Germany. I'd be glad to share that technology with you.

And so we're addressing greenhouse gases and tailpipe emissions to the point where I said to the United States, we'll have a mandatory fuel standard that will reduce our gasoline consumption by 20 percent over 10 years. It's a remarkable initiative. No President has ever said that. I happen to believe that there's going to be some significant battery technology breakthroughs as well, and I look forward to sharing that with our partners. Matter of fact, the Japanese are spending a lot of money on battery technologies, and it's very conceivable one day we'll be having hybrid plug-in battery-driven vehicles with a regular-sized automobile. You can do it with a golf cart now, but on a lot of our freeways, it would be dangerous. *[Laughter]* Yours, too.

The fundamental question facing America is, how fast can we develop zero-emission coal-fired electricity plants? And we're spending a lot of money there, and we look forward to sharing technologies with our allies and friends and people who need help.

And so we've got a very strong agenda that I'm looking forward to sharing in the G-8. And one of the things I'm going to do is encourage others to step up to the research and development arena. They ought to be spending as much as we are. They ought to be investing. And then we ought to be willing to share that technology with developing countries.

And, finally, if you're really interested in solving greenhouse gases and making sure your economy grows, you ought to be for civilian nuclear power, Klaus.

Q. I'm open. *[Laughter]*

The President. There you go. You're my man. And we're spending—we're advancing an interesting initiative with Russia, Japan, France, Great Britain on coming up with new technologies on fast-burner reactors in order to be able to deal with the waste issue.

Anyway, there's a lot to talk about, and so I'm looking forward to it. It's an important subject, just like feeding the hungry is important; just like solving HIV/AIDS on the continent of Africa is important; just like dealing with malaria is important; just like poor children, particularly women, girls, getting an education is important. These are all important initiatives, and I can't wait to discuss them there.

Marcin.

U.S. Visa Policy

Q. Yes, last time you were in Eastern Europe, last year in Estonia and Latvia, you promised changes in visa regime for your close allies. Now many months—

The President. I promised I would work on it.

Q. Many months went by.

The President. Marcin, make sure you quote me correctly.

Q. Okay.

The President. Yes, let me talk about it. It affects the Czech Republic; it affects Poland; and it affects Bulgaria.

I fully understand the frustrations of countries and people of countries who have supported friendship with the United States. And they look at neighbors in the EU or NATO and say, wait a minute, we're treated differently. I understand that.

This is an issue that your leaders have spoken very candidly with me. And I told them I didn't—I thought it was unfair that the German citizen be given a type of visa and not the Polish citizen. And we're working closely with Congress to change long-standing law. And I said I would—first of all, we set up a way forward, a roadmap to visa changes. And I said I would work with our Congress to come up with a fair law that treated people fairly, and we are. We have yet to pass the law, but we are working with Congress.

There is, as you may or may not know, a healthy immigration debate taking place in

the United States. I'm a big proponent of what we call comprehensive immigration reform, as I am a proponent of visa reform, visa waiver reform.

I can't give you a firm prediction as to exactly when this will emerge from Congress, but we're working hard to see if we can't get it done.

Maurizio.

President's Upcoming Visit to Italy/Italy's Role in Afghanistan

Q. Mr. President, you said that you hope that your arrival will boost Mr. Prodi's energy on Afghanistan.

The President. No, let me rephrase that. Can I restate that?

Q. Of course.

The President. I don't want to boost his energy. I do want to sit down and talk to him about how important the Italian commitment is to Afghanistan and its future, is really what I meant to say.

Q. And that was what my question was about. What would you like Italy to do in Afghanistan and, more in general, in the war on terror? How do you see Italy as a global partner on this issue? And also if you can spend a few words on the protesters that will receive you in Rome. They are very angry.

The President. Oh, yes? I'm going to meet some protesters in Rome again? [Laughter]

Q. They declared a "No Bush Day."

The President. First of all, when you go to free societies, you tend to see protesters. Freedom of speech, that's what we're talking about. It's what happens when you travel. I presume there's going to be a few in Germany, just like there were—listen, when world leaders get together, or a leader shows up that people pay attention to, people get on TV by protesting. They've got different causes, and they want to express themselves. And I welcome going to a society where people are free to speak. That's actually a healthy thing. It's a sign of a robust society. We had a few, one time, in Genoa, if you remember.

Q. Who doesn't remember?

The President. Yes. Anyway, that's what happens when world leaders get together. Now the other—

Q. And the other question was about Afghanistan, Italy's role in Afghanistan.

The President. Yes, it's a very important role. First of all, commitment to Afghanistan, itself, helps. Basically it says to the Afghan people, we want to help you; we know you're struggling. And it encourages people. The idea of saying we're a robust, free society, and we want to stand with you as you try to develop your own society in your own image is important to the psychology of the country.

Secondly, Italy is making significant contribution—police training, judicial training. It's an important commitment. And in the war on terror, the idea of sharing intelligence when we find it, it's in both our interests. If we know somebody is plotting and planning in Italy, we'll share that information, and vice versa. And that's really what matters, is the ability to talk to each other in such a way that if we have information that is beneficial for one or the other, we're comfortable enough of sharing that information so we can protect ourselves.

Make no mistake about it, the enemy wants to strike again. We work a lot trying to find out where. This enemy is dangerous. These are ideologues who have got ambitions, and it's very important that we all take them seriously. The temptation is to say, well, maybe they're not that dangerous anymore. I'm telling you, they're dangerous, and they need the full commitment of free nations, the commitment to work together, the commitment to watch their finances, the commitment to understand what they're thinking and what they're doing. And they're moving. And they'll kill you like that in order to achieve their objectives, make no mistake about it. And the temptation is to say, oh, no, it's just a couple of guys that aren't that dangerous. They're dangerous, and I will remind our friends. Italy has been a strong partner in a lot of areas, and I appreciate it.

Petar.

The Presidency/U.S. Foreign Policy/Alternative Fuel Sources

Q. Back to Russia—you know that sometimes you spoke about the energy and energy

security. Sometimes energy is used as a political tool, especially if there is a sense of—in Eastern Europe that Russia is using its oil and gas as a political tool. Do you have any leverage on Russia and the Kremlin in this field of energy security?

And if you allow, a second, more personal question.

The President. Yes, go ahead.

Q. Just 18 months from now your second term expires. And very crucial events happened during both your terms, and crucial decisions were taken here in this building. What world and what future for this great country do you envision in the next, say, 10 to 25 years from now?

The President. Thanks. I do have—I don't know, 19 months?

Q. Eighteen.

The President. Who's counting? [*Laughter*] I'm going to sprint—first thing you've got to know about me is I'm going to sprint to the finish. I've got a lot to do. And I'm going to work as hard as I can to get it done. You've heard me talk about a lot of issues. We've got an engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan, on HIV/AIDS and feeding the hungry and dealing with proliferation and working on the environment. There's a lot to do, a lot of big issues. A lot to do here at home too—keep taxes low. I'm a tax cutter. I believe people ought to have more money in their pocket; that's how you grow your economies. We're talking about health care, a big education reform, and immigration reform.

There's a lot to do, and I don't have that much time to think beyond my Presidency. I'm occupied with the moment. That's the way—I'll put a lot of energy into the final 18 months and give it my all. That's all you can do in life is give it your best. That's what I'm going to do. I owe that to the American people. I believe we're going to get a lot done too.

My concern for America is that we never become an isolationist nation or a protectionist nation. We've had those tendencies in the past. I'm not suggesting that's where we are, but I am worried that that might happen at some point in time. It's easy to say, "Well, the competition is too tough; let's just not trade," or, "It's too difficult to fight the

terrorists," or, "It's too difficult to help advance democracy; let's just kind of retreat." I think it would be a huge mistake for America. I would hope that 15 years from now America still works with other nations to advance liberty.

I remind people about my Japanese friend Prime Minister Koizumi, now Prime Minister Abe, Shinzo Abe, a good guy. Isn't it interesting that the U.S. President sits at the table with the Japanese Prime Minister to talk about peace, and my father fought them, and they were the sworn enemy? And now we're working together on peace. Same thing can happen if the United States stays engaged and helps societies become free societies. Liberty has got an amazing way of transforming enemies into friends. Same in Germany, in many ways. We're allies. Angela Merkel and I are very close. I would hope the United States would never lose sight of that capacity.

And the other question?

Q. About Russia, political—

The President. Oh, the energy, yes. Here's the thing: You've got your worries about supplies of energy, and so do I, where we get our energy from. And therefore, our strategy is to diversify. If you're interested in reducing dependence on crude oil, then what you do is develop different ways to power your automobiles. And so we're using corn to power our automobiles. That way we don't have to use gasoline and therefore use crude oil as a feedstock.

My goal is to make us nearly totally independent from foreign sources of oil. And that ought to be the goal of a nation that worries from sole-source supplier, that you ought to figure out different ways to do it. How do you do it? Well, you can do it through nuclear technology, for example; as opposed to using natural gas to power your electricity, use nuclear technology. Hopefully, we can come with clean coal technologies so that you can burn coal.

We need to do it in the United States. We've got about 250 years of coal supply. Coal is a particular problem when it comes to pollution; we know that. We spent about \$2 billion—\$2 billion on your FutureGen plant, clean coal technologies. We believe that we'll be able to develop a coal-fired plant

that has zero emissions. And when that technology comes to fruition, if you can get yourself some coal, you've got your ability to diversify away from sole-source supplier of energy. And that's what technology is going to yield.

I truly believe over the next 10 to 20 years, you're going to see some amazing technological breakthroughs. And I believe and hope that those technological breakthroughs will make a lot of the discussions we're having here at the beginning of the 21st century moot, relative to energy security and environmental quality. I believe some of the discussions I have had with you about battery technologies will be real. I don't know if you know this, we're spending over a billion dollars on hydrogen technologies. We believe that cars will be powered by hydrogen, which will obviously relieve pressure on crude oil dependence. The emissions of hydrogen-driven automobiles is going to be dribblets of water, which will be good for the environment.

And, you know, I would hope that mankind doesn't lose faith in the capacity of technology to transform the way we live in positive ways. Here in America, what's interesting is to watch some of the investment flows of private capital. We're a system based upon private capital. And so I talked about, in my speech today, about public capital investment, public tax dollars going into research and development, over \$12 billion over the years that I've been President.

But there's enormous sums of money going into the private markets as well because people see economic opportunity can be derived by new energy technologies. And it's that synergy to be derived from public participation and public policy, the declaration of a mandatory fuel standard coupled with private sector investments that could yield breakthroughs.

And it's also healthy that there be competition. I like the idea that the Japanese are pushing hard for battery technologies. I want our people pushing hard for battery technologies. Competition is healthy. It yields better product for consumers. It makes us all work more efficiently and wiser in the end.

And so I'm an optimistic guy. I think when you look back 10 or 20 years from now, you'll be amazed at what happens. And I'm excited to be a part of it. I've got 18 more months to be a part of it here in this capacity, and it's going to be an exciting 18 months.

Anyway, thank you for your time. Looking forward to seeing you over there. Yes, enjoyed it. Good visit.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 1:20 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vaclav Klaus, Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek, and former President Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; Prime Minister Romano Prodi of Italy; Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates; President Lech Kaczyński of Poland; Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon; and President Jose Manuel Durao Barroso of the European Commission. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 1. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Eberhard Piltz of Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen, Germany

May 31, 2007

U.S.-EU Cooperation on the Environment/Upcoming G-8 Summit

Mr. Piltz. Mr. President, the German Presidency of the G-8 has put the focus for the next meeting on climate change and what to do about it. Europeans want fixed caps. You have been opposed to that all the time. Now you announced a new proposal. Have you changed your position?

The President. First, let me, if I might—I think that my friend Angela Merkel, for whom I have great respect, wants to discuss a lot of matters, whether it be HIV/AIDS or malaria or hunger, depravation, as well as climate change. And I'm looking forward to it. I really am. I've been to this beautiful part of Germany before. It's a beautiful part of your country.

No, I've always taken the issue seriously. I've told the American people and those who are willing to listen that I take climate change seriously. And today I talked about a post-